

University of British Columbia
Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Winter Term 2
(January 6 – April 6, 2016)

EDCP 508 (032)
History, Theories, and Practices of Alternative Education
Wednesday (16:30-19:30)
Room: Scarfe 202

Professor:

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Course Description

Since the 1980s, schools have been subjected to increased standardization, test-based accountability, and corporate management models, trends often labeled as the global education reform movement or GERM. One of the key effects of GERM on curriculum and teaching has been the search for low-risk ways to meet learning goals, undermining alternative and experimental pedagogical approaches and risk-taking in the classroom. This seminar will explore histories, ideologies, and practices of alternative education movements. A key aim of the course is to examine the various cultures of learning, teaching, and curriculum embedded within the diverse landscape of alternative education and the implications for formal and informal education today. Emphasis will be placed on (but not limited too) the liberal/progressive and anarchist/libertarian traditions of alternative education, including movements such as democratic free schools, unschooling/deschooling, as well as Socialist Sunday Schools, Modern Schools (Ferrer Schools).

Course Notes

I typically present a detailed plan of topics and assignments in a course syllabus, but as this course is about alternative approaches to teaching, learning, and curriculum it seems to me that a (completely) preconceived plan for the course would be at odds with the topics we will be exploring across the term.

The basic principles guiding this course are:

Educators should seek to create conditions in which students can develop personally meaningful understandings of the world and recognize they have agency to change the world.

Education is not about showing life to people, but bringing them to life. The aim is not getting students to listen to convincing lectures by experts, but getting them to speak for themselves in order to achieve, or at least strive toward an equal degree of participation and a better future.

This is an opportunity to take responsibility for and be engaged in your learning. The flip side of this idea is “if you don’t want to do it, don’t.” I’m hoping you are here because you are interesting in something or want to be. This will not be a course, like so many others, that you can just sit back and enjoy being told what’s important, what to do, and how to do it.

Hack this course. If you don’t want to do this course the way it’s set out here or you’re not interested in the direction it takes as we collaboratively construct it, then make the course what you want it to be, on your own or with others.

What you learn in this course is up to you. I’ve provided a bit of structure to get us started, but I’m not wedded to any of the details you’ll find in this syllabus, beyond the basic course topic and these principles. This is an opportunity to take risks, learn something new, learn from experience, and create positive learning experiences. There is a lot of expertise in this class to support your learning.

Make something. Talk is good and we will do a lot of talking across the term, but I also want you to make something. Create a work of art. Make a video. Do a presentation. Write a paper. Create a website, blog, or wiki. Make something connected to the intellectual, pedagogical, ideological issues related to this course and share it with us.

Grade yourself. There are no exams in this course. You will tell me what grade you deserve and provide a justification for that grade. There is no excuse for not taking intellectual risks, exploring your thinking, crossing borders, pushing the envelope, allowing your learning to be constrained by someone else’s expectations, or fearful of how someone else will judge your work/learning.

A Starting Point (Not Set in Stone)

I have ordered four books, but these are not inclusive of all the readings I presume we will have for the term, indeed we all may not read the same texts or even these texts.

[Hern, M. \(2008\). *Everywhere all the time: A new deschooling reader*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.](#)

[Hern, M. \(2003\). *Field day: Getting society out of school*. Vancouver, BC: New Star Books.](#)

[Miller, R. \(2002\). *Free Schools, free people: Education and democracy after the 1960s*. Albany: State University of New York Press.](#)

[Morrison, K. A. \(2007\). *Free school teaching: A journey into radical progressive education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.](#)

A few additional readings can be found in the course schedule below and more or different readings may be assigned throughout the term.

I have also presented a broad framework for how your writing and participation in the course might be evaluated (see the EDCP guidelines for grading on the course blog: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/ewayne/grading-guidelines/>; and see the marking rubrics for class work, assignments, participation and leadership below). Remember you will be doing the formal evaluation of your own work, these are provided as guidelines you may want to refer to, or not.

What I have not done is set out a detailed plan for all readings, topics, assignments, etc. for the entire term. Creating a more complete plan for the course will be our first order of business. I would like for the course to provide opportunities for:

- students to explore specific topics that interest them within the broad theme of the course;
- both individual and collaborative work to be shared with the class and perhaps with external groups, including, but not limited to preparing presentations; providing leadership for class discussions and activities; writing articles and/or reviews; performances; multimedia and artistic works). For example, I think it would be useful to for some or all of the students in this class to continue work on the Alternative Education Resource wiki, which EDCP 508 students created in 2015: http://wiki.ubc.ca/Alternative_Education
- both peer review and evaluation of course activities and “products” as well as a critical self-assessment of learning at the course.

With these points in mind, however, I am prepared to scratch the partially planned course described in the following pages, if the class and/or individuals have other ideas, interests, etc.

To give some structure and reduce ambiguity, I outlined the first half of the course. In addition, all students should:

- submit a description/proposal for what they plan to make (this can be an individual or collaborative project or projects) no later than February 10. [If you prefer to do something completely different from what is described in this syllabus or decided collectively as a result of discussions in class, please submit your proposal for your alternate activities at any time during the course.]
- submit a written self-assessment of learning in this course, including the mark you will receive for this course by April 13, 2016.

Class meeting dates and topics (tentative):

January 6 **Making a plan for the course**

January 13 **What do we mean by “alternative” education? Alternative methods, approaches, organization**

Readings:

Ron Miller, [A Map of the Alternative Education Landscape](#)

Robin Ann Martin , [An Introduction to Educational Alternatives](#)

Jerry Mintz, [The Whys and Hows of Alternative Education](#)

Alternative Education Film Festival:

The Summerhill School (22 mins.)

Imagine a School (8 mins.)

January 20 **Deschooling/Unschooling**

Readings:

Matt Hern, *Everywhere All The Time: A New Deschooling Reader*

Section I (Tolstoy, Bhava, Illich, Holt, Unschooled Kids, Tagore, Goldman, pp. 1-45); Section II (Hern, Redhead, Mercogliano); Section IV (McKellar)

Alternative Education Film Festival:

Schooling the World (66 mins.)

January 27 **Free Schools/Alternatives to School**

Readings:

Matt Hern, *Field Day*

Alternative Education Film Festival:

Free to Learn (77 mins.)

February 3 **Free Schools/Alternatives to School**

Readings:

Matt Hern, *Field Day*

Guest Speaker:

February 10 **Historical/Cultural Context of Free School Movement**

Readings:

Ron Miller, *Free Schools, Free People*

Project proposals due

Alternative Education Film Festival:

Learn Free (15 mins.)

February 17 **No Class (UBC Winter Break)**

February 24 **Historical/Cultural Context of Free School Movement**

Readings:

Ron Miller, *Free Schools, Free People*

Guest Speaker:

March 2 **Traditional Schools v. Free Schools**

Readings:

Kristan A. Morrison, *Free school teaching*

March 9

March 16

March 23

March 30

April 6 **Wrap up/Project Presentations**

Marking Guide For Class Work And Weekly Assignments

Component	A+ → A	A- → B+	B	C or less
Level of thought	Reflective (considers alternatives, how lessons learned might influence future actions), thoughtful, integrates course readings with personal experience.	Analytic (attempts to make sense of incidents described or patterns observed), thoughtful.	Descriptive (tells what is going on).	Confused (omits or illogically connects ideas), little evidence given.
	Excellent, exemplary work that has pushed you to a new level of understanding			
Expression	Clear, focused, complex, well-organized, precise, rich, distinctive or creative, well written/produced	Clear, focused, logical, and acceptable.	Acceptable but vague, disorderly or confusing.	Simplistic, disorganized, poorly developed, and/or lacks coherence.
Evidence	Well supported with examples and/or connections to previous experiences or readings.	Mostly well supported	Adequately supported	Sketchy or weak support
Mechanics	Meets deadline.	Meets deadline	Word processed	Word processed
	Word processed	Word processed	Some mechanical errors	Mechanical errors are noticeable relative to complexity and detract from the work.
	Free of mechanical errors.	Minimal mechanical errors		

Marking Guide for Class Attendance, Participation & Leadership

A+ → A	A- → B+	B → B-	C or less
Comes to class prepared, having read and thought about the material (brings questions or worthwhile additions to the conversation from the reader's log), having spent considerable time with the written and reflective work	Comes to class prepared, having read, written and thought about the material	Comes to class generally prepared, having read and thought about the material	Comes to class with some of the assignments prepared or is not prepared
Participates with enthusiasm, listening to others and helping to advance the understanding of the large or small group with interesting comments, examples, and insights	Participates with interest in large and small group activities, listens to others, asks and responds to questions	Participates with interest, talks occasionally or dominates the conversation without consideration of others, asks few questions	Reticent to participate or does not enter into collaborative, group activities, asks no questions